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ABSTRACT

The Committee on International Discussion and Debate (CIDD) and its contributions toward establishing a tradition of international team appearances in public debates are discussed in this paper. A brief history of the origin and development of the exchange debates is given. Highlights of Scott Noble's report to the Speech Communication Association Legislative Council of Activities in the 1983-1984 period are cited, and several personal observations based on a two-year tenure with the committee are offered. The remaining sections of the paper explore promoting diversity in collegiate forensic programs, adding to the present level of CIDD activity, and developing alternative formats for debates with other countries. The paper concludes with four generalizations about CIDD: CIDD should (1) continue with the goal of helping to diversify student experience, (2) continue the exchange program with other countries, (3) explore the means to increase its level of activity, and (4) explore development of alternative formats. (DF)

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THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION AND DEBATE AND ITS FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS TO U.S. FORENSICS

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THE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION AND DEBATE AND ITS FUTURE CONTRIBUTIONS TO U.S. FORENSICS

When the Committee on International Discussion and Debate celebrated its fiftieth birthday in 1972, the tradition of international team appearances in public debates was well established. By 1972, exchanges between the United States and Britain, Ireland, Japan, Poland, Australia, New Zealand, and India and Pakistan had entertained and enlightened audiences of the participating nations.[1]

The men credited with initiating exchanges are A. Craig Baird, Brooks Quimby, and Ralph M. Carson. The first tour was by Oxford University and included campus appearances at Bates, Swarthmore, Columbia, Yale, Harvard, Princeton, and Pennsylvania. Reciprocity was established when Bates appeared at the Oxford Union to debate the topic, "That this House approves the American policy of nonintervention in European affairs."[2]

By 1928, initiatives by individual individual colleges had grown to the extent that coordination was imperative. After an effort at organization by the National Student Federation of America, the National Association of Teachers of Speech initiated the Committee on International Debating and thus was founded the Speech profession's abiding sponsorship of the exchange activity.[3]

Exchanges with British schools were accomplished annually until the six-year interruption of World War II. Then, the post-war

period saw continued growth in interest, organization, and quality of exchanges. There were occasional variations on the pattern featuring trips to India and Pakistan and visits to the U.S. by teams from Scandinavia.

Continuing through most of the sixties, the main emphasis remained on exchanges with Britain. Late in the decade, after antics of visiting debaters almost caused a collapse of the program, the Committee decided in 1967 to tighten its operations considerably by seeking assurance of quality and ability of visitors. It further decided to seek tours of more countries willing to engage in two way exchanges. Thus, the first tours of Japan were arranged for 1969, and subsequent tours were arranged for Australia, and, in 1972, the U.S.S.R. This expansion was regularized and managed through the designation of a Speech Communication Association executive as program coordinator. This arrangement has added immeasurably to the quality of coordination and organization of the tours.[4]

As of November of 1984, the CIDD finds itself in good health with a pattern of systematic planning; well coordinated processes for selection of students to tour other countries; effective fiscal management; an increase in the number of debates exchanged and in the sizes of audiences involved, and a general broadening of the constituency of participants and hosts within the Speech and Forensic community.

Highlights of Professor Scott Noble's Report to the SCA

Legislative Council of activities in the 1983-1984 period is indicative of the level and quality of activity. Included are mentions of the "Frontline" documentary of the 1982 U.S.S.R. tour; a $2,000 grant from the Axe-Houghton Foundation; the 23 school Japanese tour of the U.S.; preparations for a U.S. tour of the U.S.S.R.; the just completed U.S. tour of the U.S.S.R.; the selection and completion of the tour of New Zealand; the current British tour of the U.S., including an appearance at this convention; preparation for the U.S. tour of Great Britain; preparation for the spring tour of Japan, and plans to host a team from the U.S.S.R. in February. It is abundantly clear that the amount of activity within the purview of the CIDD is substantial and increasing.[5]

A few personal observations by one who has been with the Committee for two years may be in order. First, having met many of the visiting students, I am convinced that they are superb representatives of the countries and national debating societies. Second, the U.S. students, both those selected and those not so fortunate, are high caliber individuals. Further, the students who have auditioned represent an ever-widening circle of institutions who wish to involve themselves with CIDD. If the earlier rosters of participating students suggested an elite set of U.S. institutions, the institutions represented in the recent past are diverse in geography and mission.

What I have presented thus far has served to orient us

to the work at hand - an examination of the future role of the CIDD in the American forensic scene. Placed against the context of intense tournament competition in debate and individual events throughout the school year, what roles can CIDD debates play? To what extent can and should foreign exchange ideas be incorporated into the domestic enterprise of providing students with a meaningful co-curricular activity? And, quite importantly, what mutual impact should the recommendations of the recent National Developmental Conference have upon the CIDD or upon individual forensic program interaction with CIDD? I will posit some claims which provide responses to some of these questions.

Promoting Diversity in Collegiate Forensic Programs

Programs differ substantially as to the scope of competitive experience they make available to participants. While some limit their participation to a small band of warriors engaging in NDT style debate, others encompass NDT, CEDA, individual events competition, hosting of local collegiate and high school tournaments, on campus public debate and performance in a variety of formats, and scholarly fora dedicated to the study of the nature and practice of argument. Clearly, it is one of the pedagogical responsibilities of the Director of Forensics to define and delimit on an appropriate scope and sequence and level of activity within the culture of the supporting institution. But, it is also a philosophic and educational duty of that Director to occasionally reassess and evaluate and criticize the good status quo.

The ethics statement of the Evanston NDCF states that:

> ... Because all students can benefit from forensic experience at some level, and because all students, at whatever level, require and deserve educators' attention and efforts, educators should strive to treat all students fairly and to promote equality of opportunity for appropriate and challenging experiences.[4]

The CIDD program provides diversity for programs in two ways. First, it selects very outstanding students to represent the U.S. abroad. This experience can be a lifetime highlight for such a student as Melanie Gardner of Sanford University, a young woman who competed vigorously in the NDT environment with considerable success. At the close of the 1983 Japan tour, she wrote:

> ... I found the tour enlightening in many ways. It made me reflect upon my debate career and the value of this activity in our colleges. The tour opened up my thoughts concerning the idea of learning a foreign language through debate. The tour provided a first-hand view of the culture and the life of college students in Japan. Basically, I can say with certainty that the tour provided me with an experience and a wealth of knowledge that I could not have gained in any other way.[6]

Yet a second dimension of diversifying programs relates to experience on the local campus. Hosting a CIDD event on campus provides members of the local debate group with important opportunities in a variety of areas. The debate itself allows the team to demonstrate its skill before a campus audience. The publicity is desirable. Students are provided challenges in planning publicity, logistics, scheduling, and planning and

executing social events which support the actual debate. And, of considerable importance, is the social interaction with the visitors. This provides opportunity for worthwhile social events which build the cohesion and social fabric of the local group. And, not to be overlooked, is the interaction with outstanding students from other countries. If managed with care and imagination by the local hosts, the visit of a CIDD team provides opportunity for a host of new and different activities, events, and learning tasks. This is certainly a diversifying influence for the program.

Thus, even assuming that the CIDD tours remain a fairly constant event in the future, more programs and more students can add new dimensions to the forensic activity through the skillful addition of these programs to their present programs.

Adding to the Present Level of CIDD Activity

It appears that there is growing enthusiasm for appearances of teams in the U.S. It may be possible over the next few years to increase the number of tours. Further, as "densification" develops, the cost per unit may decrease through shorter itineraries, fewer days off between schools, and multi-campus joint events. The Committee should monitor the amount of interest in the future and expand opportunities for appearances as finances and interest permit. Directors who have good experiences should spread the word and encourage others to take part. In toto, this would simply magnify the impact of the program - more programs, more

audiences, more visitors here, and more U.S. students able to travel abroad under the program.

A second possibility is addition of more countries. The Committee members have expressed interest in a Chinese exchange. Others in the community with potentially fruitful contacts should make possibilities known to the Committee. I would think it reasonable to attempt to add five or six countries in the coming decade.

One very real financial problem is the cost of sending students to a central location to audition. On the one hand, it deters those without serious expectation of success. But, cost no doubt deters some individuals and programs from participation. The practice of holding auditions at a tournament is sound; the practice of auditioning at SCA may be questionable. It would be very desirable to have a fund available to subsidize students who are selected to audition in cases where local funding is unavailable. The CIDD should also explore alternatives to its current audition procedure.

Developing Alternative Formats for Debates with Other Countries

The present format emphasizes quality of students sent abroad. This would appear justified since these students represent the U.S. before audiences, some of which are very large. It may be time, however, for CIDD or others to explore alternative possibilities with the purpose of providing foreign experiences

for more students. One concept might involve the tournament or workshop format without the necessity of audiences. For example, many of our institutions have centers for study available in overseas locations. One wonders if an event might not be devised with tournament characteristics which would allow numerous students to gather and participate in an overseas forensic experience. Perhaps a like number of host students could be persuaded to participate in a tournament, a conference, a workshop, an individual events tournament, or all of the above at the foreign site.

A second possibility for maximizing opportunity for participation would be to persuade a group of foreign students to come to the U.S. for an event. A tournament could be the answer, but other possibilities have been discussed above. Several institutions now have ongoing exchanges with foreign universities and those linkages might provide the vehicle for inclusion of students from a variety of U.S. institutions.

The problem with either of the above possibilities is development. Strong leadership and planning are required. Some dedicated individual, preferably someone with experience in foreign cooperative education and a keen and creative sense of American forensics, needs to take charge. It may be that some agency could obtain a grant or other support. The minutiae and coordination involved are considerable, and this may explain why we do not already have such activities available.

Obviously, financing of any such open-participation program would become the responsibility of either the local forensic program or the participating individual. It may be that some element of academic credit could be included in a package where speech activity was combined with intercultural studies indigenous to the locale. While the particulars of any such program are less than obvious, and while substantial energy would be required to develop a format and a package, the result should be worthwhile from several vantage points.

First, such activity would add to the education of students. It would do more within the quid pro quo we already use trading off student motivation in the activity as motivation for a very worthwhile educational payoff. Considering the dedication and hard work most of our students bring to the activity, one could well expect a superior foreign study program.

A second payoff would be in broadening the experience of those directors who are all too often bogged down in managing the routine of forensic programs. Overall, such increased foreign contact would improve teachers of debate and argument through the broadening influence of foreign travel and of working with foreign students.

Looking forward to the coming decade and considering the recommendations of the Evanston National Developmental Conference on Forensics, a few generalizations emerge:

1. The best potential contribution CIDD can make toward

the goals of the NDCF are in the areas of diversification of student experience.

2. The CIDD should continue to carry forward its traditional program of arranging and promoting exchanges of debate teams with other countries.

3. The CIDD should explore means to increase its level of activity by gaining support from more U.S. programs, by establishing exchanges with other countries, and by exploiting economies of scale.

4. The CIDD or others should explore development of alternative formats which would provide foreign exchange opportunities for U.S. debaters and competitive speakers.

The CIDD has served American and international debate well in its first sixty-two years of activity. Let us hope that its upward trajectory is sustained as it provides an important element in the broad spectrum of American forensic activity.

END NOTES

[1] Hall, Robert N., and Rhodes, Jack L. Fifty Years of International Debate: 1922-1972. Washington, D.C., Committee on International Discussion and Debate, Speech Communication Association, 1973, p. 4.

[2] Ibid., p. 7.

[3] Ibid., pp. 5-22.

[4] "Ethics Statement," National Developmental Conference on Forensics, Evanston, IL., September 15, 1984. In Press.

[5] Nobles, Scott, Report to the S.C.A. on the CIDD, 1984. Unpublished.

[6] Gardner, Melanie, "Report on the Japan Tour, 1984." Submitted to the Committee on International Discussion and Debate, Speech Communication Association, Washington, D.C., 1984.